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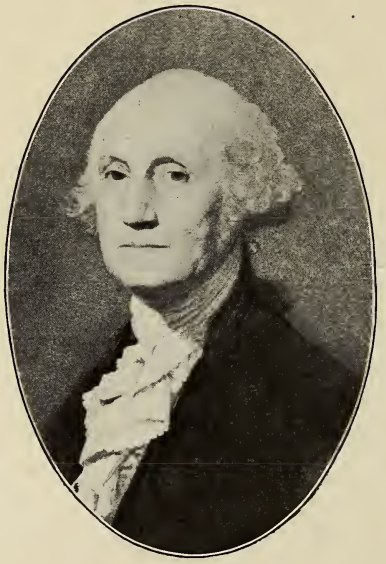
WASHINGTON AND LINCOLN

By Marc M. Reynolds.

To America and Americans the month of February is more significant than any other month of the year. It is the birth month of the two greatest men in the history of this Republic — George Washington and Abraham Lincoln — and their names emphasize epochs and eras in the history of the United States. One was instrumental in establishing the country's independence—the other in preserving intact the co-operation of individual States in one united cause of freedom and progress. Both efforts were attended with frightful loss of life and sickening flow of patriot's blood, during the darkest periods of American history.



George Washington was born in Bridges Creek, Virginia, February 22, 1732. His boyhood days were spent amid refined and picturesque surroundings, accompanied by the comforts which well-to-do country life afforded at that period. The rudiments of his education were obtained in an old-field-school house, supplemented by attendance later at a very superior private school, in which was inculcated the basis of a practical education

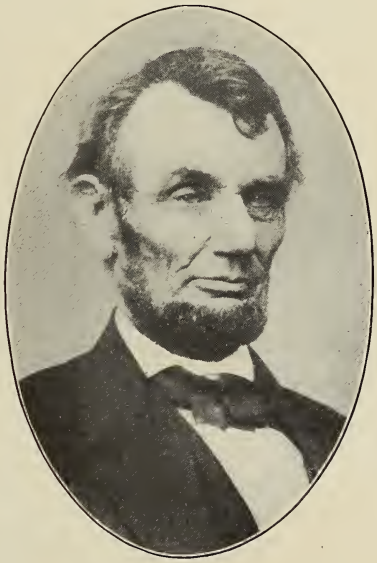
Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky, amid the humblest of surroundings and most ignorant of communities.

Washington's early life passed through a developing period which gave him the crystalized force of maturer years while he was yet in his teens, and his love of excitement and devotion to his country made him a soldier at the youthful period of nineteen years, and in recognition of his services in the fight for independence, honored him as the first President of the United States in 1789.

Lincoln's years of youth were uninteresting and prosaic. Void of all intellectual accompaniments, his knowledge of affairs was gained only from his simple life on a primitive farm, less than a year's schooling altogether, the almanac and an occasional book which accident put within his reach. At the age of twenty-one, Lincoln left farm work and entered a country store as clerk. Then followed his remarkable career of progress which eventually placed him in the distinguished office of President of the United States in 1861, passing through such various intervening preparatory achievements of life as soldier, merchant, lawyer, representative to the Legislature and member of Congress.

The same fundamental strain necessary in the character of really great men, ran through the mental fiber of both

Washington and Lincoln—honesty and truthfulness. Both had natures full of tenderness, both were generous, both possessed unfaltering courage. In other respects these men differed. Washington had a dual nature, and one craving the excitement of the battlefield; the other pining for the peaceful shadows of the large trees at Mount Vernon. Ever when planning his future life beyond the period of service to his country, he looked forward to spending his remaining years there in agricultural pursuits. He did not seek the office of President; it was urged upon him and he dutifully accepted it. Contrary to a popular idea, Washington was diffident among strangers. He was not talkative and was easily embarrassed if suddenly appealed to on unimportant subjects, but in an emergency of public questions affecting the government and his relations to it, he could express himself in language so indelibly stamped with truth, that his words carried conviction to his auditors. He was a strong but not a brilliant writer, he was forceful and convincing.



Lincoln was steadfastly ambitious and was not as romantic as Washington. Early in his public career he nursed a desire to be President of the United States; though in its incipiency, his was but a faint suspicion of hope. While in later years he may have entertained some latent thought of returning to rural scenes to spend his declining days, he is not known to have given expression to such a thought. His life as a farmer had been of a sort to destroy any desire to return to it; so different from Washington's pastoral experience. Lincoln was a ready talker, a good story teller and possessed a rugged style of oratory and a magnetism that swayed his hearers and won for him friends and supporters in private and public life.

As men in the abstract they were similar, both being tall, strong, and in their younger days, fond of athletic sports; both were champions among their circles of acquaintances, and both were born leaders, naturally accepted as such by all with whom they came in contact all through life. In temperament Washington was inclined to be quick but had good control over his temper, while Lincoln was calm and deliberate. Each had his critics and enemies and each passed through the fiery furnace of war, discord and national disruption, and each had the pleasure of witnessing the achievement of final victory and peace; one to share in the honor of his past sacrifices by presiding as President over a united government; the other to die by the bloody hand of a traitorous assassin in 1865, just as the last shadows of war and disunion had passed.

Truly noble and self-sacrificing, these distinguished patriots will ever hold the two most important places in American history.

MR. FRANCIS L. HINE, THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK, NEW YORK CITY.